

Remarks

The Office Action mailed April 21, 2004 has been carefully reviewed and the foregoing amendment has been made in consequence thereof.

Claims 1, 3-5, and 8-16 are now pending in this application, of which claims 1, 3-5, 8-10 and 12 have been amended and of which claims 14-16 are newly added. Claims 2, 6, and 7 have been cancelled. It is respectfully submitted that the pending claims define allowable subject matter.

The claims have been amended for clarity, readability, and consistency.

The objection to claim 9 is respectfully traversed. Claim 9 has been amended to depend from claim 14, and Applicants accordingly request that the objection to Claim 9 be withdrawn.

The rejection of Claims 1, 5-6 and 10-12 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Taguchi et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,383,020) is respectfully traversed.

Claim 1 recites an apparatus for connecting electrical components including a plug having a generally box-like configuration; a plug terminal position assurance-element having a generally box-like configuration, said plug terminal position assurance element being structured to fit at least partially within said plug; a cap having a generally box-like configuration; and a cap terminal position assurance element having a generally box-like configuration, said cap terminal position assurance element being structured to fit at least partially within said cap; wherein, when the plug is mated to the cap, the plug, the cap, the plug terminal position assurance element and the cap terminal position assurance element interlock to form a box-in-box-in-box construction.

Taguchi et al. describe a connector (1) including a male connector housing (2), a sealing member (5) fitted to an end of the male connector housing (2), a rear holder (6) which retains the sealing member (5) to the connector housing (2), and a side spacer (7).

Contrary to the assertion otherwise in the Office Action, it is respectfully submitted that the side spacer (7) does not have a generally box-like configuration. It is clear from the Figures of Taguchi et al. that the side spacer (7) has a complicated, irregular shape which is not fairly characterized as “box-like.” Rather, as best seen in Figure 1, the side spacer (7) has a stepped outer surface which with mutually perpendicular portions which vaguely resembles a notched L-shape in the outer contour thereof. In Figure 2 of the present application, and as described in paragraph 31 of the present specification, the TPA of the present invention has “a generally box-like appearance, with four continuous walls and a first open end and a partial web across the second end.” In contrast, the side spacer (7) of Taguchi et al. has no less than eight walls defining its outer perimeter, and the upper wall in Figure 1 is clearly not continuous. Rather, the upper wall of the side spacer (7) in Figure 1 includes at least three distinct portions extending at different elevations relative to a bottom wall.

It is also respectfully submitted that Taguchi et al. does not disclose a plug, a cap, a plug terminal position element, and a cap terminal position element which interlock in a box-in-box-in-box construction. It is evident from Figures 3, 5 and 7 of Taguchi et al. that the side spacer (7) is axially displaced from each of the sealing member (5) and the rear cover (6) when the connector (1) is assembled. The sealing member (5) abuts against an end of the male connector housing (2) when the connector (1) is assembled, and locking members (32) and (33) of the rear holder (6) penetrate the sealing member (5) and maintain the sealing member (5) in position on an end of the housing (2). The side spacer (7) however, is located internally to the male connector housing (2) at a distance from the sealing member (5) and the rear holder (6). Thus, the arrangement of the sealing member (5), the rear holder (6) and the side spacer (7) at varying positions with respect to the male connector housing (2) precludes a box-in-box-in-box-in box construction when the connector (1) is assembled.

Claim 1 is therefore respectfully submitted to be neither described nor suggested by Taguchi et al., and claim 1 is therefore submitted to be patentable over Taguchi et al.

Claims 5-6 and 10-12 depend from claim 1, and when the recitations of claims 5-6 and 10-12 are considered in combination with the recitation of claim 1, claims 5-6 and 10-12 are likewise submitted to be patentable over Taguchi et al.

For the reasons set forth above, Applicants respectfully request that the Section 102 rejection of claims 1, 5-6 and 10-12 be withdrawn.

The objection to claims 2-4, 7-8, 11 and 13 is respectfully traversed.

For the reasons set forth above, Applicants request that the objection to claims 2-4, 7-8, 11 and 13 be withdrawn.

With respect to newly added claim 14, this may be recognized as former dependent claim 7, now cancelled, rewritten into independent form. As claim 7 was indicated as reciting allowable subject matter in the Office Action, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 14 is patentable over the cited art.

Newly added claim 15 is closely related to dependent claims 11 and 13, which were each indicated as reciting allowable subject matter in the Office Action. Applicant therefore submits that claim 15 is allowable over the cited art.

Newly added claim 16 may be recognized as former dependent claim 2, now cancelled, rewritten into independent form. As claim 2 was indicated as reciting allowable subject matter in the Office Action, Applicant respectfully submits that claim 16 is patentable over the cited art.

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In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, all the claims now active in this application are believed to be in condition for allowance. Reconsideration and favorable action is respectfully solicited.

Respectfully Submitted,



Bruce T. Atkins
Registration No. 43,476
ARMSTRONG TEASDALE LLP
One Metropolitan Square, Suite 2600
St. Louis, Missouri 63102-2740
(314) 621-5070